

Inscriptions

– contemporary thinking on art, philosophy and psycho-analysis –
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Editorial

Sustainability: Do you wonder how many people read *Inscriptions*? The answer to that is that we have more than 2,000 users per six-month period. A “user” is indicated by a unique IP-address. As readers may access the journal from several devices, the number of “users” may not be identical to our number of “readers”. Nevertheless, as the publication period for each issue of *Inscriptions* is six months, we estimate that our current readership is at least 2,000 per issue. How many of these readers have subscribed to the print edition of our journal? Unfortunately, the answer to that is “less than ten”. For this reason, when an independent academic publishing project like ours seeks to secure long-term viability, subscription, while seemingly an alluring option, has proven not to provide sufficient ground for a sustainable operation.

Open Access: Indeed, why on earth would you pay for something you can get for free? With *Plan S* in 2018, a multi-national project that built on the earlier George Soros-funded *Budapest Open Access Initiative* (2002) and the later *Berlin Declaration* (2003), twelve key research funders, including the United Kingdom Research and Innovation, the Gates Foundation, the Research Council of Norway, and a host of other national research organisations and NGOs in Europe, Africa, and Asia, require that all research output from their projects be published in Open Access journals. From the perspective of the commons, the logic is clear enough: in so far as research has been paid for by the public, it is fair that the fruits of that research are made available to everyone. Or, to put it differently, there is no good reason that research the public has funded through taxes should only be accessible to those who are able and willing to pay a second time, this time to

publishers.

Labour: Add to this the reality that, while most so-called high-impact journals are published and monetised by one of the big five academic publishers, an industry that ranks among the most profitable globally, much editing is done by academics as unpaid voluntary labour. Or, to put it more precisely, it isn’t that these academics who serve as editors aren’t paid: they are, rather, ‘paid’ in being subsidized by their host academic institution. The work they put in for the corporate publishers is considered a “service to the community”, and therefore part of the brief they signed up for when they took the job.

Adjustment: No wonder, then, that many top academic publishers have had to go through a sometimes painful process of adjustment in the wake of *Plan S*. With free contributions from scholars, and much editing work done for free, they had still been able to charge subscription fees that threatened to bankrupt some university libraries. This was the situation *Plan S* sought to end. But what, then, about the exorbitant revenue streams, based on minimal overheads, to which these publishers had become addicted?

Article Processing Charges (APCs): Obviously, running an academic journal isn’t without costs. Unless you want to run a journal as a hobby – a prospect that isn’t likely to outlast the initial enthusiasm of its founder – you will have to find ways to fund administration, hosting and/or printing, various web-services, and many other small and bigger expenses, including rental of office-space, technical equipment, and so on. What the big publishers have increasingly done is to turn from revenue through subscription fees to Article Processing Charges. In some cases these charges can be

used to fund open access, while in others there is a flat fee. In the latter instance, Open Access should be included in the charge.

Journal Impact Factor: There is a sense in which this policy seems to fit well with Plan S: in so far as the purpose of this initiative was to open up the results of publicly funded research to the public, APCs shift the cost of publishing from the reader to the research institution. Now, with fees ranging from a few hundred Euros to many thousand, some academics and administrators have objected that the big five have found a new way of milking public coffers. This may be so; however, there are more reasonable outlets available. What is necessary is that research assessment boards and hiring committees are willing to reconsider the dogma of “high-impact” journals. One laudable initiative in this respect is the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA, 2013), which suggests to academic institutions that they should “eliminate the use of journal-based metrics, such as Journal Impact Factors, in funding, appointment, and promotion considerations”, and that they begin to realise “the need to assess research on its own merits rather than on the basis of the journal in which the research is published”. *Inscriptions* offers up one such option: ours is a journal that provides an affordable alternative, and yet one that is open access. Our indexing services include DOAJ and ERIH Plus, and we are archived by the National Library of Norway, as well as on archive.org. Publishing with us is therefore a way to secure long-term, open access availability for your academic work.

Emerging scholars: When we in the upcoming volume introduce APCs, we have decided to offer a reasonable fee structure: While our standard rate stands at a modest €120, we also offer a reduced rate to students and the unwaged, who cannot be expected to have their

publication fees reimbursed by their host institution. We do this to remain a relevant venue also to emerging academics, including those who are stuck in what has been referred to as the “academic precariat”. With this new policy we want to fund important initiatives, and to lay the ground for our long-term sustainability.

This issue: The present issue of *Inscriptions* demonstrates the scope that an independent, open-access initiative such as ours is able to provide. Written by a mixture of seasoned scholars and emerging academics, our articles range from innovative Creative Criticism – see David Ritchie’s exciting “Stumbling on Dover Beach” – to more traditional legal-philosophical ruminations. In this issue Gianluca Ronca discusses responsibility, punishment and reconciliation in transitional justice. Gorica Orsholits demonstrates how, in a time when poetry seems to have reached a dead end, contemporary French poet Philippe Beck finds a way into the “cracks in the wall”. Exploring a myriad of inter-texts, including works by Jacques Derrida, Walter Benjamin, and Jean-Luc Nancy, Orsholits suggests that Beck, with the poetic cycle *Opéradiques*, reaches for a novel enthusiasm for the future. Is his a stronger poetic form that might enunciate the unspeakable?

The texts of Jacques Lacan are much discussed in contemporary philosophy, psychoanalysis, and literary studies. Tomás Ramos Mejía explores the notion of the gap in Lacan, and, drawing on the work of Argentinian psychoanalyst Alfredo Eidelsztein, Ramos Mejía interprets texts by George Bataille to find an unconscious, manifested in the drive, that is experienced not as mystical, but as indicative of a particular type of social bond.

Happy reading!

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